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ABSTRACT

This issue paper discusses service learning in the community college and lists three major cultural values that, in the past, shaped college missions: (1) civic participation--preparing students for effective participation in community life; (2) extending educational opportunity--offering all Americans a low-cost education near their homes; and (3) diversity--cutting across ethnic lines, socioeconomic classes, educational interests, geographical boundaries, and generations. Service learning--a recent teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility--combines these traditional values and revives colleges' original missions. Well structured service learning partnerships are vital to the community college's values and beliefs--its "conscience"-- in many ways: (1) they allow students to be viewed as valuable resources and to create democratic and equitable schools; (2) they train tomorrow's teachers to value democracy and civil diversity; and (3) they transform students into citizens. Kapiolani Community College (Hawaii) is presented as an example of a college that integrates service learning into its curricula. Since 1995, more than 3,000 Kapiolani students have served at more than 70 community-based organizations and schools. (CJW)

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Issue Paper

Service-Learning/Community Service Community Colleges

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October 2000

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The Community College Conscience: Service-Learning and Training Tomorrow's Teachers

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Across the landscape of American higher education, one senses the increasing intellectual colonization of higher education by advocates of accountability and gurus of management. Business and private-sector terms, such as "risk taking," "restructuring," "client focused" and "responsive to market demands" weave their way through what many call the "creeping vocationalism" of higher education.

At the same time, universities, colleges, nonprofit organizations and private business extol the virtues of thoughtful "mission statements" designed to focus energy and activities within the organization and represent the organization to its "clientele." Rarely, however, does one hear about or challenge the "conscience"[1] of organizations in relation to the communities they serve. The conscience of America's community colleges is one area that needs to be examined.

For example, one of the major challenges confronting America's communities is school reform. How has the community college movement responded? When U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley called for two million new teachers over the next 10 years, did community colleges rise to the challenge? Have they responded to the teacher shortage with the same enthusiasm and resources as they have to meeting the shortage of technology workers? More seriously, are community colleges truly addressing community needs, or are they catering to a corporate agenda?[2]

One approach that is helping community colleges "find their conscience" is service-learning. Over the past decade, more than 400 American community colleges have integrated service-learning into their curriculum and pedagogy.[3] Spurred by funding and technical support from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Campus Compact's National Center for Community Colleges and the Corporation for National Service, community colleges and their students are learning through service at a new level of engagement in the towns and cities that support them. Service-learning and the community college are, as AACC said in a 1995 journal article, a "match made in heaven."

Service-learning partnerships among K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, colleges of education and community-based organizations provide K-12 students with more of the one-to-one affective and academic attention they need to reach newly established content and performance standards. Through these partnerships, education majors also can receive the experience and practice they need to reach and teach an increasingly diverse student population in the decades ahead.

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[1] Adapted from Kozol, Jonathon (1996). *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation,* New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

[2] Johns, Rebecca (1999). "It's Time to Debate Our Mission." *National Education Association Advocate,* vol. 1, no. 8.

[3] American Association of Community Colleges Service-Learning Clearinghouse (1999, August). Personal communication.

Without a profound shift in the way teaching and learning are approached, without an explicit focus on breaking vicious cycles of failure,[4] tens of millions of Americans will be left behind in a "winner-take-all society."[5] As Paul Wachtel, research professor of economics at NewYork University, asserts, "Indifference ... is a quiet toxin. It severs the sinews and nerves of society without announcing itself. Its effects are devastating, but its tracks are hidden in the overall attitude of 'each man for himself' that is so prominent a part of our society's ethos."[6]

Service-learning is a powerful antidote to such indifference. It can break society-generated and self-perpetuated cycles of failure by creating opportunities for educators and others to work toward everyone's education success. The community college conscience implies a major responsibility in this transformation of community and nation. Incorporating service-learning into teacher education is a practical and manageable catalyst to this change. And bringing service-learning into the mix fits well into the culture and history of community colleges in this nation.

Community College Culture

As Edmund J. Gleazer noted in *America's Community Colleges: The First Century*, "There is in community college history a discernible search for institutional identity, that is, for recognition and public understanding in terms of a mission different from and yet in some respects similar to the missions of both of its progenitors, the secondary school and the college."[7]

Because the community colleges are a movement, a work in progress, they are susceptible to shifts in the winds of local, state and federal funding, and economic growth and recession. Their adaptability is a strength, but it also can be a source of ambiguity and tension. Within the community colleges today, at least four prominent sources of ambiguity and tension exist between the following:

- Faculty committed to remedial/developmental education and those committed to university transfer
- Faculty committed to student access and persistence and those committed to maintaining standards
- Faculty committed to general education and administrators committed to economic development
- Faculty committed to quality classroom instruction, and administrators and technicians committed to technology and distance education.

Gleazer, AACC president emeritus, emphasizes three shared values and beliefs in American community college culture. These values and beliefs fit squarely in the service-learning approach:

- Community colleges should have a strong relationship to their community, emphasizing civic participation.
- Community colleges should extend educational opportunity.
- Community colleges should value diversity.

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[4] Wachtel, Paul L. (1999). *Race in the American Mind: Breaking the Vicious Circles Between Blacks and Whites.* New York, NY: Routledge.
[5] Gladieux, L.E., and Swail, W.S. (1988). "Postsecondary Education: Student Success, Not Just Student Access." *The Forgotten Half Revisited,* Samuel Halpern, Ed. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.
[6] Wachtel.
[7] Gleazer, Edmund J. (1994). "Foreword." *America's Community Colleges: The First Century,* Allen A. Witt, et al., Eds. Washington, DC: Community College Press.

The College in the Community: Civic Participation

Early in this century, Dean Alexis Lange of the University of California School of Education and other leaders in education urged junior colleges to give priority to programs that prepare students for effective participation in community life.[8] In 1922, the American Association of Junior Colleges[9] asserted that such colleges may, and are likely to, develop a curriculum, "suited to the larger and ever changing civic, social and vocational needs of the entire community in which the college is located." Fourteen years later, Byron S. Hollinshead, an influential writer on American junior college education in the pre- and post-World War II era, emphasized that "the junior college should be a community college, meeting community needs" and that its work "should be closely integrated with the work of the high school and the work of other community institutions."[10] In 1947, the Truman Commission further encouraged development in this direction, saying the community college should "become a center of learning for the entire community."[11]

By the 1970s, after a period of unrest in the '60s, community college leaders were taking a "marketing approach," struggling to meet the needs of all the community's citizens and reflecting on whether their primary role was in "university transfer" or as "hub of a network of community educative agencies and organizations."

Extending Educational Opportunity

A second major cultural value in the community college movement has been the extension of educational opportunity. In 1947, the Truman Commission called for public education to be "made available, tuition-free, to all Americans able and willing to receive it, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, or economic and social status."[12] With millions of former service personnel returning from the European and Pacific theatres of World War II, enrollments in community colleges soared through 1948.

Throughout the 1950s, state plans for community colleges emphasized the need for campuses to be within commuting distance of the majority of the state's population.[13] Rapid enrollment growth in cities with existing universities provided evidence that these "opportunity colleges" were reaching new populations. By 1965, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education emphasized that "the junior colleges are particularly charged with providing services and programs not offered by the other institutions and to educate a more heterogeneous student body."[14]

Throughout the 1960s, America built nearly one community college per week, and by fall 1970 there were 1,091 community colleges, and enrollments had quadrupled to nearly 2.5 million students.[15] During this time, the concept of the "open-door college" gained advocates, and by the end of the decade, most Americans had a community college with lenient entrance requirements and free or low-cost tuition, within commuting distance of their homes and jobs.

Valuing Diversity

Diversity is the third shared cultural belief of the community college movement. As Gleazer notes, community colleges continue to cut "across ethnic lines, socioeconomic classes, educational interests,

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[8] Bogue, J.P. (1950). *The Community College.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

[9] The terms "junior college" and "community college" are synonymous in this essay. The evolution of "junior" to "community" colleges is a long and fascinating story in itself. See *America's Community Colleges: The First Century,* Allen A. Witt, et al., Eds. Washington, DC: Community College Press, 1994.

[10] Hollinshead, Byron S. (1936). "The Community Junior College Program." *Junior College Journal,* vol. 7, no. 3.

[11] President's Commission on Higher Education (1937). *Higher Education for American Democracy,* vol. 1, 1937.

[12] Gleazer.

[13] Gleazer.

[14] Gleazer.

[15] Witt.

geographical boundaries and generations, and bring people together so that not only their differences, but also their common interests and needs can be acknowledged and valued."[16]

These three values – community responsiveness and civic participation, extending educational opportunity and valuing diversity – are essential to the community college conscience and mission, as well as to those of service-learning. They provide the guiding principles for community colleges to implement service-learning for both students and teacher candidates in the 21st century.

Enter Service-Learning

Service-learning is a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility. Service-learning enhances what is taught in the college by extending student learning beyond the classroom and providing opportunities for students to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities. At the national level, the Corporation for National Service's Learn & Serve America program has been a primary supporter of service-learning in K-16 schools, while the Campus Compact organization has provided both a national- and state-level infrastructure for service-learning in higher education.[17]

Both of these organizations have encouraged greater interaction among K-12 schools, community colleges and universities. In recent years, there has been some programmatic movement from a "direct services" approach, in which college students provide in-class or after-school tutoring and enrichment programs at K-12 schools, to a "collaborative model," where K-16 students partner to plan, develop and implement service-learning programs addressing identified needs in their own communities.

Service-learning, from this perspective, provides a key insight. In much of society, too many students have been viewed from a "deficit perspective" – that is, a focus on what they cannot do rather than on what they can.[18] What all students can do is serve others and their schools and communities. Further, Martin Haberman, distinguished professor of curriculum and instruction, and Linda Post, associate professor of curriculum and instruction, both at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, argue that effective multicultural curricula focus students "on their current lives by studying real-world problems rather than preparing them for living later on in the best of nonexistent worlds."[19] For too long, educators and others have talked to students about future citizenship, rather than allowing them to be citizens now in their schools and communities. Twelve years of marginal civics education, however, does not add up to a lifetime of productive citizenship.

But what if students were asked to learn citizenship actively, supporting their teachers in the learning enterprise, applying their knowledge of English, math, science, social studies and physical education as tutors to younger students and those at risk of falling behind? By actively learning citizenship through service, they would work to create democratic and equitable schools where no one is marginalized and where everyone is able to achieve the content and performance standards. With each student viewed as intrinsically valuable, new affective and academic resources and skills can be shared with younger students and those at risk of falling behind.

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[16] Gleazer.

[17] The Education Commission of the States' Compact for Learning and Citizenship works to institutionalize service-learning in K-12 districts.

[18] Zeichner, Kenneth M., et al. (1998, Spring) "A Research-Informed Vision of Good Practice in Multicultural Education: Design Principles." *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 37, no. 2.

[19] Haberman, Martin, and Post, Linda (1998, Spring). "Teachers for Multicultural Schools: The Power of Selection." *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 37, no. 2.

Back on the community college campus, through well-focused and deep reflection, shared in written form with their instructor or verbally with other students and combined with a multi-semester commitment to service, students can explore the underlying causes of educational inequality. Further, they can become civically engaged, acquiring the democratic skills to press the citizenry at large and numerous levels of government for educational equality. Through well-structured school-based service-learning and campus-based reflection and leadership, community college students from across the ethnic and income spectrum can be actively engaged in creating democratic and equitable schools and learning how to create a democratic and equitable America.

Training Tomorrow's Teachers

By reflecting its conscience and reasserting its values and beliefs – community responsiveness and civic participation, extending educational opportunity and valuing diversity – community colleges can play a significant role in training tomorrow's teachers and transforming students into citizens. There are four specific reasons why community colleges should integrate service-learning as pedagogy, curriculum and partnership in training tomorrow's teachers:

Community colleges reach diverse minority and immigrant communities and vice versa. Through well-structured service-learning programs emanating from the community college, students can tutor in their communities as they develop academic skills. If American K-16 education is to be truly equitable and not leave millions of people marginalized, tomorrow's teachers must come from these communities. At the schools, diverse community college students can provide positive, meaningful and immediate role models for success as both students and citizens.[20]

Demographer Samuel Kipp projects toward the year 2010: "The nation's college-age population will be even more ethnically diverse than the general population because of differential birthrates and migration patterns. Furthermore, the most rapid growth will occur among groups traditionally more likely to drop out of school, less likely to enroll in college preparatory course work, less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to enroll in college and least likely to persist to earn a baccalaureate degree."[21]

Well-structured service-learning for teacher training partnerships among community-based organizations, K-12 schools, and community colleges and universities can make a huge difference in providing these students with a foundation for educational success in higher education and future careers.

Community colleges reach a growing proportion of nontraditional, older adults in employment transition. Through service-learning, these adults can provide authentic, current and informed voices regarding careers and futures in the new American economy. Haberman and Post delineate the attributes of "the best and brightest" teachers for culturally diverse children and argue that individuals between the ages of 30 and 50 are very effective teachers in low-income urban schools.[22]

As professional teachers, these older adults bring a new experience-based understanding of career and citizenship education to their content-area instruction. A new career pathway can be designed to connect K-12, traditional and nontraditional community college students and education majors to *advanced teacher education* and career opportunities through colleges of education. This advanced teacher education also must include *advanced technical education* in the use of computers and the Internet, writing skills, subject-area mastery, proficiency in a second language and public speaking.[23] All of these skills are easily integrated into a well-organized community college service-learning program.

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[20] Haberman and Post.
[21] Gladieux and Swail.
[22] Haberman and Post.
[23] Nidds, John A., and McGerald, James (1996, May). "Preparing Students for the Next Millenium: Secondary School Administrators Have Their Say." *Bulletin of National Association of Secondary School Principals.*

Through service-learning, first- and second-year college students can receive more experience and practice teaching in elementary, middle and high schools. One of the major criticisms of teacher education is that "university programs are too removed from their students' ultimate workplaces, K-12 schools. Scattered student teaching experiences at the end of their education are too little, too late, some say."[24] If community college and lower-division university students learn through service during their teacher training, they will be well-prepared for tomorrow's increasingly diverse classrooms. They will have a firm grip on service-learning as a pedagogy that they and their students can use to reach younger students and those in danger of falling behind.[25]

Kapi'olani Community College: Service-Learning for Training Tomorrow's Teachers

Kapi'olani, one of seven community colleges in the University of Hawaii system, began its service-learning initiative in January 1995 with Corporation for National Service funding. College leaders saw service-learning as a powerful new pedagogy to improve the academic performance of an extremely diverse traditional and nontraditional Native Hawaiian and Pacific-, Asian- and Euro-American student population. As a curriculum, service-learning promoted civic responsibility and civil diversity. As a partnership, it created a new relationship between the large institution and the community it serves.

Since 1995, more than 3,000 Kapi'olani students have served at more than 70 community-based organizations and schools, and the college consistently has emphasized the need to train students for active engagement in a civic democracy with civil diversity. Student assessments completed in 1997 demonstrated that service-learning and critical reflection helped the college students become more confident in their ability to make a positive difference in the community, to communicate more effectively and to work as a team. Improvements in academic performance, as well as student persistence, also were evident. Of particular interest was the finding that service-learning students viewed their instructors as more caring individuals.

Since 1997, Kapi'olani has received additional funding to develop a variety of other partnerships and service-learning efforts. For example, a partnership with University of Hawaii, Manoa faculty and students led to a "pathways model" to better identify student service-learning impacts in the community. A one-credit course for service-learning students interested in helping young children learn to read resulted in more than 900 children tutored throughout the island of O'ahu. A major "Teen Reading Festival," which brings young readers together with the novelists whose works they read, resulted in strong new partnerships with local high schools.

Community colleges are institutions of higher education, committed to teaching and learning. According to the League of Innovation, "Studies on community college education demonstrate that our faculty consider teaching to be their primary mission and that they approach this mission as champions of a range of innovations, such as service-learning, writing across the curriculum, cooperative learning and learning communities. As the current 'learning revolution' amplifies our focus on educational outcomes, however, community college faculty are newly challenged to find creative and meaningful ways to inspire student learning."[26]

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[24] "Teacher Education Goes Back to School (1999, May)." *Techniques.*

[25] Swick, Kevin J., et al. (1995, November). *Service Learning and Teacher Education.* South Carolina Department of Education.

[26] "Technology, Learning and Community: Perspectives for Teaching Excellence Award Recipients" (1998, November). Mission Viejo, CA: League for Innovation in the Community College.

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Although community college instructors and professors are committed to student learning, they receive little in the way of formal training and sustained support for professional development. By taking on the training of tomorrow's teachers, they will have a new impetus for their own learning by doing.

Through service-learning for teacher training, community colleges can reach a more diverse student population and provide more field-based training throughout the lower-division general education curriculum; involve nontraditional older students in teacher preparation; determine early whether individuals have the predisposition for successful teaching careers;[27] create a foundation for service-learning in future teaching; and create an increasingly diverse, community-connected faculty, focused on the scholarship of teaching for the 21st century. Most important, they will come to view students for who they really are – intrinsically valuable human beings with resources to contribute to academic success and to a civic democracy that genuinely values civil diversity.

Conclusion

Well-structured service-learning partnerships are vital to the community college conscience in many ways. First, they allow all students to be viewed as valuable resources and to create democratic and equitable schools, where all students have a realistic opportunity to achieve content and performance standards. Community colleges have thousands of students with unique experiences and skills that can be channeled through service-learning partnerships and pre-education advising to support K-12 teachers, younger students and those at risk of falling irreversibly behind.

Second, many new teachers will be needed in the decade ahead. While only 52 community colleges have begun to integrate service-learning and teacher training,[28] about 1,000 have invested substantial resources in training tomorrow's technology workers. Community colleges need to place equal or greater emphasis on addressing the national teacher shortage. They make up a vast network that can provide critical support to schools and the national effort to train teachers for the 21st century. Through service-learning, tomorrow's teachers can be helped to value civic democracy and civil diversity and to have the human touch, learned and nurtured through service.

About the Author

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[27] Numerous studies have pointed to appropriate "predisposition" as a critical factor in teacher success. See Huling, et al. (1996) and Haberman and Post (1998), referenced earlier.
[28] AACC Service-Learning Clearinghouse (1999, May). Personal communication.

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For More Information

The Compact for Learning and Citizenship (CLC), a project of the Education Commission of the States, provides K-12 school leaders, legislators and other education stakeholders with resources, profiles and strategies to integrate service-learning through practice and policy. District superintendents and chief state school officers are invited to join. The CLC Web site (www.ecs.org/clc) also provides links to other organizations, clearinghouses, publications and resources. Contact Terry Pickeral, project director, at 303-299-3636 or tpickeral@ecs.org, or Lou Myers, project coordinator, 303-299-3644 or lmyers@ecs.org.

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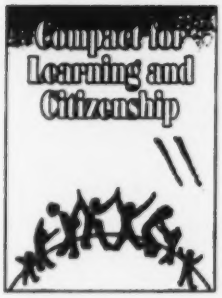
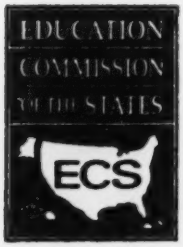


The Center for Community College Policy, based at ECS and supported by the U.S. Department of Education, conducts research and analysis; supports a Web-based electronic database on issues of community college policy; serves as a clearinghouse for state officials, college leaders and the media on issues of community college policy at the state level; publishes and disseminates policy papers; organizes national, regional and state-level workshops around issues of community college policy; and provides technical assistance to states. See www.communitycollegepolicy.org.



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